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THE CONDUCT OF THE FOUR MANAGERS OF COVENT-GARDEN THEATRE

FREELY AND IMPARTIALLY EXAMINED,

Both with regard to their preſent DISPUTES, and their paſt MANAGEMENT.

IN AN ADDRESS TO THEM,

BY A FREQUENTER OF THAT THEATRE.

LONDON,

Printed for J. WILKIE, in St. Paul's Church-Yard; J. WILLIAMS, in Fleet-Street; and J. ALMON, in Piccadilly.

M DCC LXVIII.

[PRICE ONE SHILLING.]

INTRODUCTION.

THE Writer of this Addreſs had long intended to publiſh ſome Remarks on the Conduct of the Managers of BOTH (*) THE THEATRES; *in Hopes that they might awaken them to a Senſe of their Duty to the Town, and prompt them to redreſs many Grievances often complained of towards the Publick. But from this Deſign he has always hitherto been prevented, by Employments which more immediately claimed his Attention. Now, that the Circumſtance of the Diſputes among the new Managers of one of thoſe Theatres, ſeems to make them rather the more ſeaſonable; he offers them, ſuch as they are, to the Publick, (for whoſe Service they were meant) together with his Obſervations on the Diſputes themſelves. He is very conſcious of not poſſeſſing Abilities equal to the Diſputants: yet preſumes that his Thoughts may not altogether prove unworthy the Attention of the Lovers of Dramatick Entertainments.*

(*) In the courſe of this ſhort performance no notice will be taken of Mr. FOOTE's theatre, which may be ſaid to be as yet in its infancy: and no one, I think, can deny the readineſs of that gentleman to improve it to the ſatisfaction of the Town.

AN

ADDRESS

TO THE

FOUR MANAGERS

OF

COVENT-GARDEN THEATRE.

IT were to be wiſhed that men whoſe avocations place them conſiderably above the vulgar, knew how to ſilence their paſſions, whenever indulging them too much may tend to the diſgrace of their character. In whatever ſituation they may find themſelves, it ſurely behoves them to make the moſt of it, either with regard to their own intereſt, or the maintaining their reputation unhurt. Thoſe who ſeek only immediate applauſe, or immediate profit, without duly conſidering what ſteps they take to arrive at either, may ſoon find that money will not purchaſe, nor talents inſure, ſucceſs; if they are not guided by calm and diſpaſſionate minds, alone productive of rational ſchemes and commendable endeavours.

I WILL venture to ſay that had you *all four* firmly adhered to the above ſelf-evident maxims, you would not now find yourſelves in the unhappy predicament wherein you are, both in regard to the publick and yourſelves. You undertook a taſk from which great expectations aroſe: you knew each other's tempers and abilities perfectly well, before you made a joint purchaſe, which might have rendered you cautious not to give offence to one another: or if you were ſtrangers to thoſe particulars, and unacquainted with your reciprocal diſpoſitions, yet you ought to have come together fully determined to pleaſe and be pleaſed. You ought to have deſpiſed punctilios, as unworthy the regard of men in buſineſs, whoſe general and particular welfare depended on good harmony and good underſtanding among yourſelves. Thus concurring amicably in *one* great endeavour, the diſcharge of your duty to the publick; your labours would have been attended with great and merited ſucceſs. Inſtead of which, you each ſuffer pride, vanity, ſelf-importance, to rule in your hearts; which paſſions, like combuſtibles, are no ſooner in contact with ſome ſparks of a neighbouring fire, but they burſt into a blaze of the moſt miſchievous conſequences. From the ſlighteſt offence, (perhaps not meant) diſcord, and irreconcilable animoſities, have aroſe in the world, ſometimes amongſt the deareſt friends; and none willing to own themſelves in the wrong, which would hurt their pride too much, each has, like you, endeavoured to form a party in his favour: whereby truth, candour, humanity, decency are all ſhamefully violated, and ſacrificed to unrelenting malice, or to the puerile ſatisfaction of ſeeing the adverſe party publickly cenſured. Falſe notions of ſuperiority are entertained, each wants to command and to govern, none are willing to obey; quarrels enſue; confuſion and diſmay are abroad; miſchief triumphs.

You have formed two parties, which may be called the *acting-party*, and the *comptrolling-party*. And as you have each ſubmitted your conduct to the publick, you will be the leſs ſurprized at this *curſory Addreſs*, wherein animadverſions are freely made upon your reſpective allegations. Every man is doubtleſs at liberty,

as

as one of the publick, to declare his ſentiments on the occaſion. I wiſh mine may be conducive to reſtore peace among you, or at leaſt prove inſtrumental to the redreſſing of thoſe grievances and abuſes the Town complains of relating to theatrical affairs; to which it can ſcarcely be ſuppoſed that you pay any attention, whilſt you ſuffer it to be ſo much engaged with your private quarrels.

I SHALL, in the *firſt part* of this little Piece, enter into the merits of your NARRATIVE, and TRUE STATE of the Differrences, eſpouſing neither party, but making ſuch ſtrictures on *each*, as the nature of the DISPUTES betwixt you will allow. Herein expect not to be treated with lenity; which your conduct towards the publick does not deſerve. Had you preſerved that awful regard for its ſatisfaction, which you profeſs, and which your duty, as its ſervants, required; you would not have given way to ſo much peeviſh diſpoſition againſt each other; (1) but would have united in conſulting the taſte, ſatisfaction, and approbation of the Town, in order to gratify them. In this you have been deficient, as well as the Managers of the *other* houſe. I ſhall, therefore, make it a *ſecond part* of theſe Remarks to tell you, according to my beſt judgment, not only in what particulars you have *all* been wanting in your duty; but likewiſe in what that duty conſiſts, and what abuſes or neglects you ſhould remedy, to approve yourſelves good Managers, and grateful to the Town for its encouragement.

(1) No appeals from the Managers to the publick would, if ſo, have been neceſſary: but, now that they are made, they muſt expect to be looked upon as ſo many *wrangling domeſticks*, who live too well at their *Maſters' expence*; and who juſtly deſerve the wholeſome rod of correction, to ſet them all quiet again.

PART

PART I.

ON peruſal of your reſpective appeals to the publick, the firſt object which muſt naturally ſtrike any by-ſtander, is the great weakneſs of men, who chuſe rather to expoſe one another to the whole world, (*i. e.* to friends and foes) than to endeavour to huſh-up and compromiſe by mutual conceſſions any private quarrels which may have ariſen amongſt themſelves. You ſhould have applied to your caſe the caution of your own Captain *Macheath*, who politely ſays, that "no private diſ-"pute of his ſhall be of any ill conſequence to his friends." In like manner, though you might have been ever ſo much diſpoſed to diſagree amongſt yourſelves; yet you ſhould *in this one thing* have agreed, that the publick, your beſt friend, had never known it, nor had been the worſe treated for it.—The next thought, which may occur on the occaſion, is, that, with a moderate goodneſs of heart, you would probably have been at much leſs pains to effect a thorough reconciliation, by each meeting half-way towards it, than you actually have been at, to repreſent yourſelves reſpectively quite innocent; when it muſt neceſſarily happen that *ſome of you* muſt be in the wrong. I doubt not, however, but I ſhall be able clearly to ſhew that you have ALL been greatly to blame; ſome by giving, and others by taking offence.—Laſtly, your want of reſpect to the publick is alſo obvious by your publications. You ought not, by any means, (to uſe your own expreſſions) *to trouble it on ſo improper an occaſion as the ſquabbles of individuals*. You, indeed, now plead an abſolute neceſſity for it; but with what little reaſon, is manifeſt; ſince, had you each been ſincerely deſirous of making up contentions and diſputes, there is no doubt but, by the help of your friends and acquaintance, you might have effected it. (2) But

(2) We are told by Meſſrs. HARRIS and RUTHERFORD, in their *Narrative*, (p. 34.) that *a meeting of their reſpective ſolicitors took place*, to ſet all to rights, *but proved ineffectual:*

But your hearts were too much alienated from each other to admit of it: and now you have juſtly incurred the deriſion and contempt of the world on the occaſion.

THE avowed deſign of the *Narrative* publiſhed by Meſſrs. HARRIS and RUTHERFORD (the heads of your *comptrolling-party*) is,—to juſtify themſelves;—to prevent miſrepreſentation of facts, by indubitable and authentick evidence;—and to prove to the publick that they have been greatly injured, both in perſon and property, by Mr. COLMAN, (one of the heads of your *acting-party*). Mr. POWELL is alſo ſeverely handled in that *Narrative*, probably, only becauſe attached to Mr. COLMAN.

THAT they have made good all, or any one of, the above aſſertions, (3) will, I preſume, be more readily granted by their partiſans, favourites, and dependants, than by the voice of impartiality. It is not doubted, however, but that the documents, inſerted as evidence in their favour, are genuine. But, like ſcripture differently interpreted by different ſects, they have all along ſo commented upon them, as to put the moſt favourable conſtruction on their own behaviour, and ſhew that of their antagoniſts in the moſt hideous light. Their ſuppreſſing alſo a great number of letters, which paſſed during the diſpute, and which throw great light upon the whole, cannot be deemed ſo fair as if they had publiſhed them. Their adverſary has been more candid in that reſpect. That they are bitterly prepoſſeſſed, and actuated by implacable reſentment and revenge is too plain: but that the provocation has been ſufficiently great to cauſe either, is more uncertain.

fectual: they ſhould have been ſo explicit and candid as to acquaint us by whoſe fault, or by what accident, it was rendered abortive. It ſhould ſeem, by what appears from both publications, that the *acting-party* was more averſe to a compromiſe than the *comptrolling-party:* but, indeed, the former was not the aggreſſor; which might make them loath to comply with it, from a conſciouſneſs of not being in fault.

(3) I ſhall avoid quoting both from the NARRATIVE and TRUE STATE as much as poſſible, in order not to lengthen this pamphlet unneceſſarily. The reader is referred to thoſe publications for the better underſtanding of what is here ſaid.

WHEN, at the perſuaſion of Mr. POWELL, they conſented to admit Mr. COLMAN to be jointly concerned with them in the management of Covent-Garden theatre; it was, they ſay, *in hopes of reaping ſome of the many advantages which Mr.* POWELL *ſo warmly declared would be derived from a connection with him.* But then they alſo confeſs, that his *talents as a dramatick writer, and his known familiar intercourſe with the ſtage, induced them to acquieſce.* Here it ſeems plain that they were convinced, by whatever means, that their intereſt would be in very good hands, under the direction of Mr. COLMAN. They feared no injury to their property from a coalition with them: his character and honour ſtood unimpeached, and forbid the moſt diſtant ſuſpicion of ſiniſter deſigns againſt them. But, perhaps,

Had *Jaffier*'s wife prov'd kind, he'd ſtill been true.
VENICE PRESERV'D.

The alluſion I here mean muſt not be underſtood in an abſolute literal ſenſe: but *this* one may eaſily conjecture, (even from ſome paſſages in their own *Narrative*, which could not be omitted, but ſeem to have been brought in with reluctance) that, had no maid, wife, or widow, been the cauſer of *perſonal altercation*, it is poſſible all parties would, to this day, be on very good terms together. Thus a woman cauſed the conflagration of *Troy*; thus do women ſometimes lead men by the noſe, pretty nearly after the manner of Capt. R—E leading Mr. R———D by it, ſince theſe quarrels began. But that gentlemen, who may have *whole ſeraglios* at command, ſhould yet ſuffer *particular favourites* to cloud their reaſon, and to perplex publick concerns, muſt be accounted for only from that weakneſs of mind which I have hinted at before.

ON the articles of agreement reſpecting the management of the theatre being entered into, the 14th day of May, 1767, between the four Managers, Meſſrs. HARRIS and RUTHERFORD doubtleſs meant to delegate to Mr. COLMAN a power of managing and conducting the theatrical province, *uncontrouled*, according

ing to his beſt judgment. I ſhould think that, they having acknowledged his abilities, a limited prerogative would ſcarcely have been worth his acceptance: and it is well known that men who are at the head of affairs do not love to be *directed in office*. We may, therefore, fairly infer that the firſt article of that agreement, which inveſted Mr. COLMAN with the direction of the theatre, was at that time underſtood, in the *true ſpirit* of it, to be *abſolute*; notwithſtanding the third article, which was perhaps then propoſed and accepted, only as a matter of form to ſhew that the right and authority of the non-acting parties ſtill exiſted to the purpoſe of enquiring into COLMAN's conduct, had it tended to their diſadvantage. This conſtruction ſeems to be juſt: for if the *Acting-Manager* was obliged to adhere to the *letter* of that third clauſe, which might ſubject him to a frequent and capricious diſapprobation of meaſures which he might judge to be right in the common courſe of buſineſs;—and if ſuch diſapprobation muſt operate to the ſetting aſide of what, in his judgment, he accordingly thought conducive to the pleaſure of the Town;—it would follow that he had a power and no power; that he was to be the *Acting-Manager*, and yet had not a right to *act* as he thought proper; whilſt the others, who had given up the direction, ſhould yet be at liberty to meddle in it.

THE inſinuation thrown out (4) that COLMAN's not ſtipulating for a conſideration for his ſervices, as director of the theatre, ſhews that it was never intended he ſhould take more trouble on himſelf than HARRIS or RUTHERFORD,—is very unfair. Though no ſalary was allowed him for managing; yet, probably, the honour of being elected *Theatrical King* might ſerve him inſtead of one. Beſides, when he came among them, he depended on being employed in that capacity: and the certainty of being well paid for his Comedies or Farces, which he was ſure would always be accepted, was not a trifling conſideration. So that the force of the argument in favour of his right to being, by the *ſpirit* of the agreement, the undiſturbed and abſolute

(4) In a note, at page 36 of the *Narrative*.

director,

director, is by no means weakened; notwithſtanding his own letter of the 1ſt of November laſt, wherein he told Meſſrs. HARRIS and RUTHERFORD that any *meaſures againſt which they ſhould jointly proteſt in writing ſhould not be carried into execution:* meaning, no doubt, meaſures of more conſequence than the appointing of any particular actreſs to perform any particular part, which it muſt have been improper and beneath thoſe two gentlemen to interfere with. For, be it obſerved, that their greateſt ſtreſs, to prove his breach of articles, is laid on the play of *Cymbeline* being acted contrary to their proteſt againſt it; which yet they would not have forbid, but for Miſs *Ward*'s having been firſt propoſed to act the part of *Imogen*, rather than Mrs. *Leſſingham*.

MR. COLMAN is therefore acquitted, at leaſt in the particular of caſting the parts and exhibiting what pieces he pleaſed, of any breach of articles ſubſiſting between the four parties concerned. They had embarked themſelves on board of a veſſel, the rudder of which was put into his hands, and they all confided in his ſkill to bring the good ſhip to her *deſired* port (their joint *emolument*) in ſafety. The trial of a voyage, *i. e.* one ſeaſon, was expected, and might doubtleſs be granted, *undiſturbed*. At the end of which, it would have been time enough to have called the pilot to an account, if, through his fault or neglect, the returns had not been equal to their joint expectations.

BUT, though I thus acquit him of an *ipsô factô* breach of contract, he will enjoy a triumph of but ſhort duration, when I acquaint him that he is nevertheleſs greatly to be blamed. For he muſt certainly have given his brother-patentees ſome flagrant proofs of diſregard, ſome great provocation and inſult, by which they could be ſo much irritated againſt him. His good ſenſe ought to have ſuggeſted to him that, though he had a right to command players, dancers, ſcene-ſhifters, and candle-ſnuffers, yet he had no power over his aſſociates. A genteel, winning, gentleman-like behaviour was by ſo much the more his duty, as his ſtation was more exalted. A calm, diſpaſſionate remonſtrance would have become him much better, when oppoſed or contradicted,

contradicted, than raſh and precipitate reſolutions, which diſcovered too much of a proud and arbitrary temper. He would alſo have avoided the imputation of avarice, had he not been ſo haſty in taking out of the treaſury the ſum mentioned in both their appeals, for *trifling* alterations in the play of the *Rehearſal*, and *intended* ones to *King Lear*. Theſe are petty, mean tricks, beneath the dignity of a gentleman: ſo that if he has incurred cenſure, I take it for granted, nay, am ſure, it is not altogether undeſerved. In ſhort, *they* are to blame, *he* is to blame: the very idea of affronting, or being affronted, at any thing which either might ſay or do, ought to have been inſtantly repelled by each: no thought ſhould have been uppermoſt but how to pleaſe the publick: and though his colleagues had ſubmitted the direction to him, yet, in point of good manners and friendſhip, their advice ought by no means to have been diſregarded: they might very well be capable of furniſhing ſome uſeful hints for their general good, and the ſatisfaction of the Town.

As to poor WILL. POWELL, nothing that the *Narrative* of Meſſrs. HARRIS and RUTHERFORD alledges againſt him, implies much to his diſadvantage. He thought proper to ſide with his old friend GEORGE COLMAN, *Eſquire*, and *that is* crime enough in him with the two *opponents*. It is true ſome ingratitude is laid to his charge towards Mr. HARRIS; but neither the accuſer or the accuſed of that particular, are ſo explicit, as to enable us fully to find him guilty, or to acquit him of it. I muſt, however, here obſerve, that there ſeemed a pretty conſiderable tendency in his elders, even from the beginning, to keep him a mere CYPHER (as he himſelf complains) in regard to the management; which was diſingenuous in them. Yet, as he had conſented, and was handſomely paid as a performer, his endeavours ought to have been employed rather as a kind and generous mediator, (5) if he could, than an obſtinate

 oppoſer.

(5) Mr. COLMAN, in his *True State*, takes great pains to repreſent him as having really endeavoured to be that mediator. But there is a kind of *cold* mediation, which ſometimes leaves matters juſt where they were; and an *inſidious* one, which tends to exaſperate them. I know not how to credit that he did *all* in the ſincereſt and moſt prudent manner to accompliſh a reconciliation.

oppoſer. But, I ſuppoſe, the pride and ill-manners with which he has lately been reproached, with reſpect to a pretty prologue, kindly ſent him to be ſpoken at the play of *Philaſter*, have but too much tainted his mind already; being intoxicated with his ſucceſſes, and the favour of the Town.

In regard to what is ſaid in the *Narrative*, of his ſiniſter views in engaging Mr. and Mrs. *Yates*, by which his own ſalary was advanced, it may, indeed, carry a ſpecious appearance with a ſuperficial reader; but we muſt confeſs that the charge is victoriouſly anſwered in the *True State*; it being proved, by ſound argument, that he yielded more than he acquired by their being ſo engaged at Covent-Garden theatre. Nevertheleſs, as to the requeſt made him by his opponents, to deliver into the wardrobe-keeper's office the cloaths then in his poſſeſſion, he ought immediately to have complied with it, at any rate.

From the other parts of the *Narrative*, I cannot find, any more than from what I have hitherto animadverted upon, that the authors of it have proved the heavy charge of injury to their perſon and property which they alledge againſt Mr. Colman. He may, indeed, have ſhewn them ſome neglect, and have behaved himſelf with ſome haughtineſs, but has done them no wrong. And this, whatever be the future conſequences of their unhappy diviſions, muſt afford as much ſatisfaction to him, for being innocent, as ſhame to them, for a falſe accuſation.

I come now to the *True State* of the differences, publiſhed in anſwer to the above *Narrative*, (6) as well as to the *Manuſcript Caſe*, drawn by the *comptrolling-party*, and exhibited at Slaughter's coffee-houſe, which laſt Colman calls a downright libel. But, if it was one, ſo is the printed *Narrative*, which is only a repetition of the *Manuſcript*. This anſwer, it muſt be acknowledged, is a ſpirited and elegant, though not a finiſhed, per-

(6) The *Narrative* was publiſhed on Saturday the 6th, and the *True State* on Saturday the 13th, of this inſtant February.

formance.

formance. Mr. COLMAN has greatly the advantage over his accuſers, both in point of diction and argument. I do not mean to inſinuate that the *Narrative* is ill-written: ſtill he that ſhews the moſt candour has the beſt title to indulgence. As they knew the ſuperiority of his talents, they ſhould have been afraid of entering the liſts with him; the more ſo, as they muſt have felt an inward conviction of being the aggreſſors; conſequently they could not defend ſo good a cauſe as he.

THE merit, however, of Mr. COLMAN's publication does not lie in its brevity; it being ſwelled to a very uncommon ſize. Thoſe who find a pleaſure in peruſing genuine *green-room anecdotes* will have their taſte much gratified by the many letters, notes, and billets here introduced. But they will be in raptures on reading an *actual challenge* ſent from one Manager to another; and on being informed of an *actual duel* being fought (7) between two gentleman on account of thoſe theatrical quarrels. The *ſober part* of mankind, however, cannot help lamenting that animoſities ſhould be carried to ſuch a pitch between men, who ſhould have lived together rather like brothers than ſworn enemies. Amidſt ſuch exceſſes what becomes of religion, philoſophy, reaſon, morality, friendſhip, and all the ties of humanity between man and man? Alas! they weigh but little in the ſcale of impetuous rage and unrelenting fury!

IT is but juſtice, nevertheleſs, to take notice of the noble anſwer returned by Mr. COLMAN to the challenge abovementioned, which was ſent him by Mr. H——s, and contained theſe words, amongſt others: *You are very welcome, Sir, to my life, if you dare any how to hazard the taking it.*——The anſwer was, *as to my daring to take your life, God knows I dare not do it; but*

(7) With piſtols, in Hyde-park, on Thurſday, the 4th of this inſtant February, between Capt. R—E and Mr. R———D, in conſequence of the noſe-adventure, mentioned in page 6. The latter's piſtol miſſing fire, the captain generouſly fired his in the air; upon which a ſeemingly cordial reconciliation enſued; but it is proved by the *True State*, that R———D repaid his antagoniſt's heroiſm with much ingratitude and inſincerity.

you

you and every other man ſhall find that I dare on all occaſions to defend my own. I think ſuch an anſwer (which, indeed, was quite in character from a writer of moral eſſays and comedies) ſhould have touched the ſender with deep ſorrow for his raſhneſs; and that he ought from that moment to have left no means untried to effect a permanent reconciliation.

In the *True State* it is inſiſted, from inference, that Mrs. *Leſſingham* the actreſs has been the *real cauſe* of diſpute between the parties. I do not pretend abſolutely to determine how far her influence may have promoted it: but *this*, on an attentive peruſal of the whole, appears evident, that nothing can be more *trifling* than the firſt riſe, nor more *perverſe* than the continuance of thoſe diſputes, which have thus been carried to the utmoſt lengths of extravagance. It muſt excite the wonder and ſurprize, perhaps the pity, of the judicious part of mankind, to ſee talents and knowledge, and education, of no avail to ſtifle in their births the deformed monſters of envy, ſuſpicion, and revenge, which, from ſuch trivial cauſes, are capable of rendering friends and brothers ſo very obnoxious to one another.

O ye diſtracted Managers! reflect a little on your own conduct. Let each of you lay his hand upon his heart, and all ſeriouſly aſk yourſelves which of you it was, who, by gentle and humane, condeſcending and affable behaviour, in every inſtance, endeavoured to prevent this miſchief before it happened; — or who, with ſuitable command of his own paſſions, was ſo little averſe to proper conceſſions as a remedy, when it happened, that he actually did his utmoſt towards it; — if you can all be ſatisfied that you have done *this*, I pronounce you as harmleſs as lambs; — but if any of you, (or all as I fear) cannot bear the touchſtone of that enquiry, the inference is very eaſy.

I think it needleſs to expatiate further on this unpleaſing ſubject. Let me juſt obſerve, before I conclude it, that if yet it were poſſible for the aggreſſor or aggreſſors to have really been ſo very inveterate, whilſt the injured party was yet rational and patient under

under the unprovoked inſults offered him; what muſt not be the guilt and remorſe of the former, and the ſilent (though not exulting) ſatisfaction of the latter? But this is impoſſible; neither does it appear from your two tales, wherein your mutual recriminations may doubtleſs afford the intelligent reader an opportunity of diſcerning that you are all greatly to blame, notwithſtanding the laboured palliations each party advances for their reſpective conduct. Still impartiality muſt allow, (but without any compliment to them) ſome extenuation in favour of Meſſrs. COLMAN and POWELL, who really ſeem to be the injured party. Notwithſtanding I pity their ſituation, I cannot help thinking but they might ſucceſsfully have applied their talents to pacify and ſooth the minds of their intemperate adverſaries. It is inſufficient for the completion of *genuine ſelf-applauſe* not to be the moſt guilty; we muſt alſo be conſcious of the moſt perfect, and even unſuſpected, innocence.

PART II.

HAVING thus ſufficiently animadverted, and with the juſtice you deſerve, on your two appeals to the publick; I come now to touch upon thoſe particulars in which you have been deficient in point of conſulting the taſte and true ſatisfaction of the Town. This, I repeat it, ſhould have been your chief aim, but has been ſhamefully neglected. What I have, however, to offer on this head, (and what, indeed, made this *publick Addreſs* neceſſary) is as much applicable to the Managers of the *Old Houſe* as to you; ſo that they are deſired to take their ſhare of it.

You have *all* availed yourſelves of the fondneſs of the publick for diverſion, to palm upon them old plays badly performed, old

 ſcenes,

ſcenes, (8) old dreſſes, paltry farces, burlettas, and pantomines of your own. But with more liberal minds, and a more grateful ſenſe of obligations for princely fortunes acquiring and acquired; you would have made it your ſtudy to pleaſe the ſenſible part of mankind by a profuſion of the beſt performances, nobly exhibited, and ſuitable to the importance and dignity of this mighty Metropolis, the ſeat of arts and philoſophy, the wonder of all Europe, by its immenſity and riches. Your narrowneſs of diſpoſition in this reſpect, muſt, indeed, in ſome meaſure be puniſhed by its own effects: for I make no doubt but, *ample* as your profits are yearly, they would ſtill have been *greater*, in proportion to ſuperior exertions; wealth would have flowed into your coffers with double abundance; praiſe, glory, and admiration would have been added to the immenſe reward. Your riches would have been unenvied as unreproached, having been acquired with honour and poſſeſſed with reputation; you would have been conſcious of having deſerved well of mankind in your ſeveral departments; whereas you muſt now ſit down with the gloomy ſatisfaction of hoarding up what you have plundered from the giddy and inconſiderate multitude, by *ſhews* which, for the moſt part, deſerve the contempt and indignation of ſenſible men.

THAT *this* is not a deduction of imaginary effects from imaginary cauſes, a momentary reflection will ſoon convince us. The publick have a juſt right to be entertained with the moſt ſublime, elegant, and refined dramatick performances that the mind of man is capable of inventing; *ſuch* as at once ſurprize, and cauſe intenſe pleaſure and admiration; which at once gratify the eyes, the ears, and the mind, with magnificent and delightful objects; *ſuch* it is your duty to encourage the pro-

(8) If it ſhould be alledged, in contradiction to this aſſertion, that *ſome* new ſcenes and dreſſes have ornamented both the ſtages this ſeaſon; — *(in praiſe of which, puffs have often been repeated)* — it is replied, that they neither have been ſo many, nor ſo elegant, as might reaſonably be expected. Every new play ſhould, doubtleſs, be preſented to the Town with *entire new ſcenes and new dreſſes*, each bearing marks of new improvements, and redoubled efforts of ſkill in point of magnificence, and characteriſtical invention.

duction

duction of, by rewards adequate to their great merit; and *ſuch*, by not checking and brow-beating growing genius and inventive fancy, you would have found in theſe happy kingdoms. Put *theſe*, if you dare, into the ſcale with the *entertainments* you have dealt us all along with ſo niggardly a hand; and let your reaſon tell which ſide will preponderate.

I MIGHT here ſtill corroborate the argument by a critical examination of the merits of your new plays, farces, and operas for ſome years paſt; and dwell more particularly on thoſe *recent ones* which you have thought proper, in your high and mighty wiſdoms, to exhibit this ſeaſon. This enquiry, however, would not only lead me out of the way I propoſed to purſue in *this Addreſs*; but has alſo been already made, with competent ſkill and judgment, by ſeveral writers who have reviewed them as they appeared; and who have, I think, cenſured them *all*, either for a poverty of invention, or for capital violations of the known rules of the drama, and a want of power to pleaſe in general. Your duty obliged you to admit *no ſuch ones*; (9) and your admitting them *ſo imperfect* can only be accounted for from your ignorance of what conſtitutes *perfect ones*. But ignorance is no excuſe, where knowledge is ſo indiſpenſably neceſſary.

LITTLE pains need be taken to prove the truth of what I here advance: for Meſſrs. HARRIS and RUTHERFORD, in their *Narrative*, happily come to my aſſiſtance, when they unwittingly turn evidences on this ſubject againſt proprietors in general, by a hint of what meaſures have been purſued for the amuſement of the publick, to which meaſures they ſay they are *averſe*; but, if ſo, other thoughts would have employed their minds beſides troubling that publick with their ſtudied and elaborate invectives againſt individuals; for their publication is

(9) What can Managers ſay for their great partiality to themſelves in introducing to the publick *their own pieces*, good or bad, to the *excluſion* of others offered to them, by authors of genius and abilities, whom they have yet dared to treat with haughtineſs and inſolence? Muſt not ſuch an abuſe be conſidered in the higheſt degree tyrannical, baſe, and cruel?

nothing

nothing leſs. They confeſs (10) that " *little artifices* have too " frequently been made uſe of, to betray the publick into an " appearance of applauding what in reality they were ſo candid " as reluctantly to condemn; *artifices* that have been ſometimes " carried to the utmoſt extravagance, to their own prejudice, " and the diſguſt of the Town." They go on lamenting, and every-body muſt lament with them, that " the art of theatrical " management ſhould conſiſt, *at this preſent time*, in the prac- " tice of ſuch *petty expedients*, to betray the confidence and im- " poſe on the judgment of the publick;—in forcing DULL " PERFORMANCES and unpopular performers on a patient au- " dience, the majority of which *audience* are introduced, *with* " *orders into the houſe*, merely to keep the reſt in countenance; " in keeping news-paper ſcribblers in pay to defend groſs par- " tialities, to apologize for wilful neglect, and to enhance the " feeble efforts of IGNORANCE and INSUFFICIENCY." This catalogue of nuiſances is now publiſhed by authority; the indictment is drawn with their own hands; who will ſay that they can plead not guilty?

BUT black and long as their own liſt may appear, other grievances, *often complained of*, but ſtill unredreſſed, muſt here be mentioned; by which it will evidently appear that ſordid avarice, and other motives equally deſpicable, are their guides, much more than the convenience, pleaſure, and ſatisfaction of the Town. They (viz. *the Managers of both houſes*) have repeatedly been requeſted, from different quarters at different times, not to open their doors 'till *five o'clock* in the afternoon, inſtead of *four o'clock*. I ſhall dwell the longer on this complaint, not only as it is a very grievous one, but becauſe it implies their want of humanity, and their total diſregard of requeſts ſo juſt and ſo eaſily granted.

TO open your doors at *five o' clock*, (it has been alledged in behalf of the publick) is abſolutely neceſſary, as, doing it one

(10) *Narrative*, page 37.

hour

hour before, is encroaching too much on the buſineſs of the people, whoſe time, in a commercial nation, ought to be held moſt precious. And how much buſineſs may be diſpatched in one hour, either by one's-ſelf, or by one's preſence being wanted, need not be inſiſted upon. On ſuch nights as any favourite play is to be performed, all parts of the theatres are always full long before *five o' clock:* and on other nights, when nothing extraordinary is expected, hardly any body begins to come in 'till *that ſame hour*, an undeniable proof that one hour is at all times ſufficient for the purpoſe of admiſſion, without any crowds or riots at the doors. The ſaving of an hour, therefore, to individuals, is the benefit contended for; denying their requeſt, is *robbing* them of it.

THIS denial implies your want of humanity, in ſhutting up ſo many fellow-creatures, for ſo long a while, in a crowded uneaſy poſture, on narrow benches fixed much too cloſe to each other. Is not the pleaſure of the feaſt purchaſed at too dear a rate, where the gueſts muſt be on the tenter-hooks of expectation ſo long before it begins? I never went to the play at ſuch a time as was neceſſary to ſecure a good ſeat, but I heard thoſe next me conſtantly exclaim,—*how tedious to be waiting ſo long!* So that the little nectar, which may be ſipped at your entertainments, is much adulterated with gall.

NOT granting the requeſt implies alſo your want of regard to the *morals* of the people: for the *hour* which they might uſefully beſtow on their reſpective callings is ſhamefully murdered, in the galleries, by that exceſs of noiſe, riot, bawling, hooting, and obſcenity which they abound with. Your's it is to prevent great part of it by curtailing of *ſo much* the time prior to your exhibitions. I ſhall ſay nothing of the barbarity exerciſed by the *upper gentry* on the *defenceleſs mortals* in the pit, with oranges and apples. To diminiſh the ſufferings of the latter, would be adding dignity to the former. I grant that, for the ſake of the invaluable bleſſing of liberty; a ſenſible man will patiently bear ſome of the curſe of licentiouſneſs; yet it ought to be the care

of thoſe whom it may concern, not to be the cauſers of it, either directly or indirectly.

MOTIVES ſuch as theſe ought to have had weight ſufficient with you to comply with the deſire of the generality, in the above particular, *long ago*: yet you never offered to vindicate your practice to the contrary, by any one argument whatſoever. Silence, however, may not altogether ſatisfy people that you are in the right. Your reaſons for continuing that great nuiſance muſt ſtill be referred to your avarice, and graſping diſpoſition, even in things where it might ſeem below your attention, however covetous; for not every covetous man will be tempted by every mean and petty accumulation of pelf, eſpecially when heaping in the groſs is immediately in his power. I am ſorry, nay, am aſhamed for you, to declare that the only reaſon to be aſſigned why you ſo impoſe on the publick, is the benefit accruing to you from ſelling tea, coffee, and fruit, by means of the eight *bawling women* who conſtantly attend at each of your houſes, often to the great incommoding of the audience. I have been poſitively aſſured that you are mean enough to take of each of them a pretty conſiderable ſum yearly for the liberty you allow them to come in, to ſell their goods; which goods, nevertheleſs, they muſt firſt purchaſe of you, or your deputies, at ſo extravagant a rate, that, in the language of *Peachum*, conſidering they muſt have their profit, to a gentlewoman upon the Town, an orange, at a ſhilling, is ſcarce worth the ſelling. They take care, however, to demand ſo much of their cuſtomers for every article of their bad commodities, (and they always ſell the very worſt of the kind) that often one cannot help wondering at their impudence, in aſking about ten times more for *traſh* within doors, than is paid for *good fruit* without. But in this branch of their trade does not conſiſt their whole occupation, as we ſhall ſee preſently. And from the neceſſity of their having ſome conſiderable time to teaze and importune the people, who come to ſee the play, it is, that you open your doors two whole hours before it begins; without which their calling would not bring near ſo much into your reſpective treaſuries

treaſuries as it now does. You ſee I ſpeak of things freely, without *mincing the matter*.

I HAVE juſt now hinted at the narrowneſs of the benches, eſpecially of the pit and galleries; and have noticed their being fixed ſo cloſe to one another, that the ſpectator ſits in the moſt uneaſy and uncomfortable poſture. I am informed that they were much more commodious even when the prices of admittance were lower than at preſent. Your taking advantage of the general eagerneſs ſhewn for your exhibitions, to place them as they are now complained of, is a further inſtance of your avarice and cruelty, which claims aloud for redreſs: as does alſo the impoſing practice of often cramming into your houſes a much greater number of ſpectators than they can conveniently hold. By this means the *laſt-comers* are a great burthen and trouble to thoſe who are *already ſeated*, though they can hardly be ſaid to enjoy any pleaſure themſelves. This over-filling of the houſes is alſo frequently the cauſe of riots, battles, and interruptions of the performance; which you might prevent, to the great ſatisfaction of the publick, even of thoſe who might be excluded on account of coming too late, by giving out a certain number of tickets, equal to the number of ſpectators only, which the reſpective ſituations of each houſe may conveniently contain, and no more. *This* nothing but your greedy diſpoſitions can oppoſe.

I SHALL next mention another nuiſance, from conniving at which, your morals and notions of decency are eaſily underſtood. This is the *ſhameful traffick* carried on in the *green-boxes*; which from thence have been denominated by the odious but juſt appellation of the *fleſh-markets*. *Other parts* of the theatres are not free from the guilt which is here cenſured. The *fruit-women* juſt mentioned find greatly their account by it: for whether they are paid as *prompters*, or as *actreſſes themſelves* in that epiſodical drama, they are ſure to levy contributions enough. I am alſo informed that the *intrigues* carried on *behind the ſcenes* with the young actreſſes, ſingers, and dancers, have in general the moſt

moſt barefaced appearance that can poſſibly be. Now, that *ſuch practices* ſhould be attempted and ſuffered in *Theatres-Royal*, which ought to be ſchools of morality, and not of lewdneſs, plainly ſhews the depravity of the age. Your's it is to bring about the remedy of ſo great a ſcandal; which may doubtleſs be effected, by diſcountenancing it all in your power, and by actually turning out any one who may either be promoting or guilty of it.

FROM a *great* nuiſance I deſcend, indeed, to a *leſſer one*; but which is ſtill very diſagreeable: I mean the not beginning the play exactly *at ſix o'clock*, as mentioned in the bills. Before the bell has done ringing twice or three times for the fiddlers, who never come at the firſt ringing; — before they have tuned their inſtruments, and played the third muſick; — a quarter of an hour, or twenty minutes, are generally elapſed. This delay, added to the long and tedious intervals between the acts, (11) and eſpecially between the play and the entertainment, is the means of protracting the diverſion much too late. Thoſe who are then a great way from home, find themſelves much diſtreſſed; (12) as in all *ſober families* a point is made of keeping good hours. Let me juſt make a calculation of the time neceſſary to be beſtowed on the ſight of a play, by a perſon living at ſome diſtant part of the town, according to your preſent method of *opening* your doors and *finiſhing* your performances.—He muſt ſet out from home very little after *three o'clock*, if he chuſes to be at the opening at *four*: then the whole not being ended often 'till *after eleven*, it muſt be very near *twelve at night*, before he can be home again. Now, it is extremely hard upon the frequenters of the theatres, to be obliged to beſtow ſuch a large portion of the day as *nine hours* on one play; when, if proper

(11) Whenever a change of dreſs is neceſſary for the actors, between the acts, or after the play, to appear again in the entertainment, (which may be ſuppoſed to require ſome time) a *dance* ought always to amuſe the audience in the mean while. Such an attention to their pleaſure would always be *noticed by*, and *grateful to*, the ſpectators.

(12) If it happens to rain, the chance of finding a coach, at a *late hour*, is next to none; which of courſe muſt add to the preplexity.

regard

regard was paid to their convenience, *two* of that number, *or more*, might be ſaved to them, without abating any thing from the exhibition itſelf; only conducting it with propriety, exactneſs, and moderate diſpatch.

MANY look upon it alſo as *a kind of inſult* on the audience to treat them with ſuch *ſhort pieces* of muſick, as are generally performed before the play begins. People, who pay for their recreations, have a right to as much as poſſible for their money. If muſick is *neceſſary* before the exhibition, which I think it is, it ſhould be played almoſt the *whole time* prior to it, and the *beſt* of muſick too: none would be tired of ſuch: it is only the harſh ſcraping of jarring fiddlers which proves tedious and diſagreeable. I make no doubt, therefore, but if you obliged the publick with more of it, at the time mentioned, it would be the means of greatly leſſening the noiſe and tumult in the galleries, by ſoothing the paſſions, and fixing the attention of ſuch as cannot ſit long in one place without diſturbing their neighbours. It would alſo agreeably beguile the time of the more quiet part of the audience, whoſe expectations are raiſed by their eagerneſs for ſeeing the play; and *all* would return home well pleaſed with their reception and entertainment.

IN ſome of the laſt news-papers I have ſeen notice taken of a wilful neglect reſpecting the not printing in the play-bills, during the firſt ſeaſon of a *new-play*, the names of the *characters*, as well as thoſe of the *actors* of it. You may, indeed, plead *cuſtom* for that omiſſion: but except it ſhould be a *uſeful one*, the ſooner it is dropped the better; eſpecially when requeſted ſo to do for the convenience of the publick. There ſeems no reaſon for omitting the method at one time, rather than at another: and it is plain that when the names both of the *characters* and *actors* are inſerted, they are a help to the ſpectator. I am loath to believe that the leaving them out proceeds from ſo trivial and mean a motive, as that of compelling, in a manner, the audience to purchaſe the book of the play. Yet, ſhould it be ſo, I leave you to your own reflections on the impoſition.

AFTER enumerating all thoſe grievances, many of which, as we have ſeen, are by Managers themſelves confeſſed, I forbear entering here into the merits and demerits of the *actors* of your reſpective theatres; or to examine how far you admit the *moſt capable*, diſmiſſing the *leſs worthy*; and how far thoſe who perform, anſwer the publick expectation. This enquiry may poſſibly furniſh the ſubject of another lucubration. At preſent I ſhall only tell you *in general*, that your ſeveral adminiſtrations have all along been deemed *feeble*, *negligent*, and *partial*, as well in *this*, as in all other reſpects. Plays *ill-choſen* have been as *ill played*: young parts have been given to old actors: and veteran actors, of acknowledged merit, have not had ſo frequent opportunities afforded them of diſplaying their talents as the publick had a right to expect.

IT muſt be owned that nothing is more agreeable than to ſee a part gone through with that readineſs, attention, ſkill, and powers which conſtitute a *capital actor*. His profeſſion, notwithſtanding the clamour of enthuſiaſts, and the auſterity of pedants, is a liberal and uſeful one in ſociety. In a calling, where ſo many qualifications both of mind and body are requiſite to diſcharge its duties properly, the perſon in whom they are found united muſt be a valuable member of the community. Whenever, therefore, through partiality, envy, and narrowneſs of ſpirit, you have diſcarded, or even diſcouraged, a promiſing genius that way, you have been faithleſs to the truſt repoſed in you by the publick. And *this* has been but too often the caſe, as you have been frequently told. It is well known that Mr. *Moſſop*, one of the beſt tragedians, poſſeſſed of the moſt pleaſing powers of voice, and gracefulneſs of perſon, would ſtill be in London, if he had met with proper encouragement. The behaviour to Mr. and Mrs. *Yates*, at the *Old Houſe*, was ungenerous and ungrateful. —On the contrary, ſome *Tragedy-Queens* have mounted the ſtage, who were totally diſqualified for their taſks (or at leaſt for *particular parts* allotted them) but were ſuffered to play, becauſe they were favourites, or had been recommended by perſons who had

had influence over you, without regard paid to their want of merit.

In their *manner of performing* too, actors are frequently ſuffered to put in ſome of their own wit, contrary to the ſpirit of the play. Buffoonery is ſubſtituted for humour; low tricks are introduced to pleaſe the galleries. Their neglect in not getting their parts *perfect* has alſo often been conſpicuous.—Paltry *dances* have been exhibited, where neither taſte nor ſpirit could be diſcerned.—Unharmonious and inſignificant *operas* (13) have deſervedly been damned.—*Pantomines* calculated *only* for the meridian of the twelve-penny gallery, (14) have been invented and revived. —Who is to blame for *all this*, but Managers? they ought to watch that nothing improper is obtruded on the Town. Their talents and their whole time ought to be readily and determinately beſtowed in its favour; nothing imperfect ought to be admitted; elegance ought to combine with magnificence, art with ſcience, to pleaſe and to delight, to poliſh and to improve the people. Thoſe who pretend to be directors of the publick diverſions ought to be men of the moſt refined taſte, and moſt extenſive knowledge; inaſmuch as the drama exhibiting pictures of all the ſituations in life, of all the virtues, vices and paſſions of mankind, it is not a ſuperficial acquaintance with a few ſubjects that can enable them to judge of the merits of thoſe

(13) The OPERA, both ſerious and comick, is thought, when carried to its higheſt perfection, to be one of the moſt refined and noble diverſions that can be enjoyed. Of this kind, however, few ſpecimens have been of late years given at the *Hay-market*, and fewer ſtill at the two play-houſes. An exhibition in which all the powers of muſick, poetry, painting, ſinging, acting, and dancing, are judiciouſly combined together, cannot fail of meeting with the higheſt applauſe. But to recommend ſuch exertions in our theatres muſt be deemed *at preſent* rather needleſs, ſince it may be expected that Managers ſhould firſt ſtudy our pleaſure in comedies and tragedies, before they attempt the more difficult taſk of a *compleat opera*.

(14) A GOOD PANTOMINE may be looked upon as a pleaſing ſport of mimick art: but to be pleaſing it need not be abſurd. To produce eternally the ſame thread-bare plot of *Pantaloon* and his *Clown* running after *Columbine*, making their purſuit ever ridiculouſly and fooliſhly embarraſſed, without once contriving any other plot or characters, ſhews a very bad taſte, and a great want of invention. However the preſent *drolls* of this kind may excite a roar of laughter from the *vulgar*, I hope it will never be contended that they can be a rational amuſement to *genteel company*.

pieces

pieces wherein they are either extolled or ridiculed. But your *powers* on ſome accounts, and your *willingneſs* on others, have often been impeached.

THE diverſions of the ſtage are of a more *national concern* than may appear on ſuperficial obſervation; for which reaſon, all wiſe governments give ſanction to them. Such admonitions as may not ſo properly be heard from the *pulpit*, ſuch vices as may not be obnoxious to the *laws*, are well introduced and well ridiculed upon the *ſtage*. A good play tends to embelliſh the *manners*, to refine the *morals*, and to laſh the *vices* of the people. To counteract, therefore, the end for which thoſe diverſions were inſtituted, is to ſpread the influence of vice, and the corruption of the age. By vigilance and activity (concurring with *judgment*) you might prevent the growing evil. It is your province to render dramatick entertainments the *ſtandard of true taſte*. You may even contribute, by your endeavours, to raiſe the *glory* of the nation, and add to her *happineſs*. Can ſuch arguments have no weight with you? Muſt you eternally be callous to reproof, and deaf to remonſtrance? I am much afraid that you really will: nor dare I to hope, from your paſt conduct, that my weak endeavours to bring you to reaſon, will be productive of an happy change in your meaſures. I ſhall not, however, have written in vain, if the *too indulgent publick* be at laſt awakened to a deſire of ſeeing thoſe errors redreſſed, which I have here pointed out. You know the publick are ſeldom, if ever, angry without provocation: but, when once rouſed, you have ſeverely felt their wrath. The tranſactions of 1763 muſt ſtill be freſh in your memories; have a care that peradventure they are not repeated.

THAT the complaints now alledged againſt you are *juſt*, is proved from the facts upon which they depend; facts that have by no means been exaggerated. Reaſon, therefore, demands their ſpeedy and effectual redreſs. Arguments may be multiplied to a very great length to perſuade you; but all will avail little, except you ſuffer *conviction* to enter your hearts: I think it needleſs, therefore,

therefore, to add any thing more to what I have already offered: as, upon the whole, this being the CAUSE OF THE PUBLICK, to its further *care* I now quietly reſign it.

POSTSCRIPT.

As it may be expected I ſhould ſay a word or two concerning the *propereſt means* of ſettling your Covent-Garden DISPUTES; I ſhall thus declare my ſentiments on what may be done to procure their final extinction.—I adviſe that the play of *Cymbeline*, the great apple of diſcord betwixt you, ſhall be played three ſucceſſive nights at that theatre; the part of *Imogen* firſt by Miſs *Ward*, next by Mrs. *Leſſingham*, then by Mrs. *Yates*; that, by a comparative view of their reſpective excellence in that part, it may be pronounced to which of the three it ought to be allotted for the future. *Pulcherrimæ detur* will, I ſuppoſe, be the ſentence *as to them*.—Immediately after the third performance, YOU FOUR, Gentlemen, to come perſonally on the ſtage, uſhered in by Mr. YOUNGER the prompter; Mr. POWELL genteelly to addreſs the Town in your joint names, begging pardon for having troubled it with a recital of your *ſquabbles*; and to pledge thus publickly your honours, not only that you never will, for the future, either directly or indirectly, renew any DISPUTES among yourſelves, but alſo that *all the grievances* complained of in this *Addreſs*, ſhall, the very next evening, and for ever after, fully be remedied; to all this the three ſilent Managers reſpectfully to bow aſſent. You ſhall then all *heartily* ſhake hands with one another; the pit and galleries will roar out *huzza!*—and the curtain will drop.

———-STREET, *February* 17, 1768.

THE END.